

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's continued thorough search and examination of the present patent application. Applicants further note with appreciation the Examiner receiving and accepting the amended drawing figures filed on December 6, 2004.

Claims 1-35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Krellenstein (U.S. Patent No. 5,924,090) in view of Epstein (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0049738). Claims 11-13 and 29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Krellenstein (U.S. Patent No. 5,924,090) in view of Epstein (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0049738), and further in view of Mockett et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0037359). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

It is noted in applicants' previous response, the present invention dramatically improves shortcomings of prior art search engines and categorization systems by enabling modifying and supplementing search categories and search attributes interactively and, to a degree automatically, by both listers and searchers. Applicants' claim 1 is directed to an interactive system for "enhancing the searchability of data[.]" More particularly, claim 1 defines "a categorization system," a "communication system" and a "cooperative facility." The categorization system "associates search terms defining categories or attributes with items to be found[.]" The communication system communicates with the categorization system and with "a store of information from which information is to be selected based on the search terms[.]" The cooperative facility is "associated" with the categorization system and "enables users, including listers and searchers, to interactively and at least partially automatically, modify or supplement the search terms initially assigned to the items to be found by the categorization system[.]" The categorization system, the communication system and the cooperative facility "are structured to store the modified or supplemented search terms."

Claim 30, as amended, is a method for searching data items in a data store, and includes functionally similar limitations. Thus, as defined in applicants' claims 1 and 30, as amended, searching of information and data is enhanced because listers and searchers can modify or supplement the search terms associated with items to be found.

Krellenstein is directed to a method and apparatus for searching a database of records, Krellenstein does not teach or suggest applicants' claim 1 (or 30) and, instead, suffers from

drawbacks such as described in the Background of the Invention portion of applicants' specification (see pages 1-14). Considering the case of a user wishing to locate a particular type and style of chair such as one in a contemporary style, with a high back and no arms, with a wood frame, and with a leather padded seat and back, using either green or blue leather (see applicants' specification at pages 4-6), a search for such an item using Krellenstein's system would result in very few hits. Unlike applicants' claim 1, Krellenstein is directed to processing a search result list to dynamically create search result categories therefrom (see Abstract, Fig. 2, steps 36, 38, 40, 42, and 44). Krellenstein does not teach or suggest modifying and supplementing search categories and search attributes interactively into a degree automatically by both listers and searchers. Instead, search result categories are associated with a subset of records in a search result list (column 4, lines 67-column 5, line 1). The present invention, in contrast, provides a categorization system that associates search terms with defining categories or attributes with items to be found, and a cooperative facility associated with a categorization system that enables users to interactively modify or supplement the search terms initially assigned to the items to be found by the categorization system.

The Examiner cites to Krellenstein, at column 3, lines 11-32, for supporting his assertion that Krellenstein defines a categorization system that associates search terms defining categories or attributes with items to be found. Applicants respectfully disagree with this characterization. More particularly, applicants refer the Examiner to column 3, lines 1-10, in which "in response to a search instruction, the database's search in a search result list which includes a selected set of records is generated. A portion of the search result list is processed to dynamically create a set of search result categories." Thus, unlike the Examiner's characterization at column 3, lines 11-32, Krellenstein describes a categorization methodology for compiling the search result list. Therefore, applicants respectfully submit that Krellenstein does not teach or suggest a cooperative facility associated with a categorization system that enables listers and searchers to interactively modify or supplement search terms initially assigned to the items to be found by the categorization system. No modification or supplemented search terms, as defined in applicants' claim 1, is provided by Krellenstein. Applicants' claim 1, in contrast, enables listers and searchers to modify or supplement search terms that define categories that are associated with items to be found. At page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner states Krellenstein does not

teach including listers or searchers; wherein the categorization system, communication system and cooperative facility or structure to store the modified or supplemented search terms.

Accordingly, the Examiner cites to Epstein for teaching listers and searchers and a categorization system, communication system and cooperative facilities that are structured to store the modified or supplemented search terms. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Epstein is directed to an information collaboration and reliability assessment system that uses metadata to provide an information sharing system. Krellenstein builds on the “open source” model that enables contributors to provide information in a metadata-enhanced database (“metabase”) to provide improved information and service. The Examiner cites to various portions of Epstein including, paragraphs 49-52, 43, 64-65 and 55-57 to support his position that Epstein teaches listers and searchers and applicants’ claim 1 categorization system, communication system and cooperative facility that are structured to store the modified or supplemented search terms. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Although Epstein is directed to users providing metadata to improve the quality and usefulness of the metabase information, Epstein does not teach or suggest applicants’ categorization system that associates search terms defining categories or attributes with items to be found. Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that one were to combine Krellenstein and Epstein, as the Examiner has done, applicants’ claim 1 still would not be taught. Instead, a database search system would be provided in which metadata is submitted by a user with respect to a database entry, and used in the categorization of search results. Continuing with the Examiner described above with respect to furniture, the same shortcoming described in applicants’ Background section of the specification would result. In other words, very few, if any, suppliers of furniture would be listed that satisfy the criteria directed to the respective search. Further, all of the other shortcomings described in applicants’ Background section would not be resolved.

For these reasons, applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Krellenstein and Epstein.

The dependent claims in the application include all of the limitations of their base independent claims, and impose further limitations thereon which distances them even further from the prior art.

Therefore, since the combination of Krellenstein and Epstein fails to appreciate, disclose or teach the basic concept or solution of the present invention, neither does the combination of the references with the secondary reference, Mockett et al., which the Office Action utilized.

For the reasons set forth above, applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance, for which action is earnestly solicited.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450, on June 20, 2005:

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